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PROVINCE OF SASKATCHEWAN

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Mr. Speaker,

Members of the Legislative Assembly,

It is my privilege to welcome you to the Third Session of the Twenty-First Legislature.

I am honoured to be here today to deliver, for my first time, the Speech from the Throne and to represent Her Majesty the Queen, at an event so central to our tradition of parliamentary democracy.

SASKATCHEWAN IN THE WORLD

Saskatchewan is founded on the strong determination, courage and perseverance of its people. We have worked together to adapt to each new challenge, often finding unique approaches to world-wide problems.

My government has been an agent of change and progress. Innovative social and economic policies have provided a solid base to protect our people and promote growth for the future.

My ministers are committed to building on this co-operative foundation to ensure our future prosperity and to continue to meet the needs of our citizens. It is especially critical that we be poised to take advantage of the global opportunities and challenges presented by new world trading patterns and rapidly expanding technology.

HEALTHY LIVING

The protection of the health and well-being of the people of this province is the first priority of my government. Saskatchewan's reputation as a world leader in health care will be strengthened and excellence will be maintained.

My government looks forward to the findings of the Saskatchewan Commission on Directions in Health Care. Professionals and the general public are responding to the Commission hearings and identifying changes required to meet the province's future health care needs. Many creative ideas are being presented such as proposals to enhance the role of rural nurses as front-line medical personnel. Additional information from other sources such as the joint report of medical professionals and the government, which shows a marked increase in the utilization of health care services since 1977, will provide critical data for the consideration of the Commission.

These and other findings will help us to plan appropriate health services for the next century. In the meantime, initial consultations of the Commission have raised crucial matters which we must not delay, such as specialization and community involvement in health care services.

Through a voluntary **CommunityCare** program, communities will be encouraged to focus health services at the local level. Health boards and communities will identify, integrate and co-ordinate delivery of health services to meet their specific regional requirements.

The integration of nursing homes and hospitals has proven to be an innovative delivery mechanism for comprehensive health services in rural areas. The expansion of integrated facilities will provide effective hospital services and the most efficient use of professional staff and resources.

The new co-operative partnership of the Saskatoon hospitals will create centres of medical excellence for northern and central Saskatchewan. Measures my government has taken have already improved access to health services in Saskatoon. Twenty-five hundred more surgical procedures were performed in the past year. Additional action will be taken throughout the province to ensure that nurse staffing levels are increased.

Such measures are important for the better co-ordination and utilization of our precious medical resources. These developments, along with other findings of the Commission, will provide directions for the future to maintain and improve our health care system.

My ministers remain committed to strengthening rehabilitation services with facilities such as the new state-of-the-art Wascana Rehabilitation Centre, expanded rural community therapy and enhanced mental health rehabilitation programs. Improved treatment facilities for alcohol and drug abuse at both Whitespruce near Yorkton and the Calder Centre in Saskatoon will provide programs to help youth and adults recover from the devastating effects of addiction.

New Year's Day marked a new era in health care administration. Saskatchewan Plastic Health Card technology simplifies patient accessibility to benefits, and improves management for health care professionals and the government. The first application of the card constrains double doctoring and prescription drug abuse. In consultation with professionals, my government will build on this success and apply the technology to the management of other health services.

My government knows that the best long-term answer to stress on our health care system is preventive programs and an increased role in assisting and encouraging people to stay healthy. In co-operation with voluntary groups and institutions, the **EVERYONE WINS** program will continue to promote healthy living for individuals and families.

As part of this commitment, a new screening program will be designed with the co-operation of the Saskatchewan Cancer Foundation and others, to assist women to identify breast cancer at an early stage. The program will be available to women in high-risk groups throughout the province.

Other preventive health programs will address seniors and northern residents. My government is very concerned about modern day threats to good health and will continue public education in the prevention of AIDS and drug and alcohol abuse.

EDUCATION

Saskatchewan students have always competed and been successful on a world-wide scale. The challenges of the future demand that we maintain our standards of excellence and prepare our youth to seize the unique opportunities of the twenty-first century.

Last year, my government initiated measures to ensure that our students acquire basic skills in reading, writing and arithmetic. Creative thinking and computer literacy are also being emphasized so that students know how to adapt to the changing needs of the future. New developments in the areas of career counselling, business education and work experience will be incorporated into the educational process.

Schools and teachers play a major role in the growth and development of our young people. We all have a responsibility to assist teachers in this critical task. Therefore, my government is seeking ways to increase parental involvement in the school system and improve communication and co-operation among schools, homes and communities.

My Minister of Education will introduce new measures to encourage students to remain in high school and will work with parents and school boards to make every effort to lower the drop-out rate. The goal is to have all students, as far as is possible, complete their secondary education.

My government is committed to increasing educational opportunities. Regional colleges, universities and the Saskatchewan Institute of Applied Science and Technology deliver programs across the province. The availability of first and second-year university classes, outside of Regina and Saskatoon, will enhance educational choices in rural communities and improve access, at a lower cost, to students and their families. My government will seek the co-operation of the universities in the establishment of a credit transfer system to facilitate the movement of students between our universities. These measures will help to prepare students of all ages for the challenge of changing labour markets.

Technology presents even greater opportunities to provide expanded access to education. Through the Saskatchewan Communications Advanced Network, to be known as 'SCAN', my government will deliver educational television by cable, fibre optics and satellite to all areas of the province. Distance learning technology will have a wide application as a learning tool for families and, in particular, will expand educational opportunities for women and single parents. Educational television will enable professionals, such as nurses, to maintain and improve their qualifications without leaving home. Health, agricultural, business, and cultural programming will be provided on this network to meet the information needs and interests of all segments of the population.

Saskatchewan's future role in the world points to the importance of communication skills in international languages. The Language Training Institute at the University of Regina will expand on the Summer Centre for International Languages Study to provide basic and advanced training in the key trade languages of Europe, Asia and Latin America.

FAMILY SUPPORT AND CHILDREN

The protection of individuals, families and children is the foundation upon which my government's policy agenda is built.

My ministers' commitment to family support and child protection will be highlighted in *The Child and Family Services Act* and *The Children's Law Act*.

My government recognizes the critical role of foster parents in providing a supportive family environment for children in need. In co-operation with the Saskatchewan Foster Parents' Association, the foster care program is being restructured to provide a comprehensive, standardized training program for foster parents with a compensation system to reflect skills and training levels.

A new *Adoption Act* will expand the open adoption service and enhance adoption alternatives. *The Child Care Act* will address services for infant care and for children of teen-parents with a continued emphasis on parental involvement. Recognizing differences in child care needs, my government will introduce a range of options for working parents and rural families.

The Community Living Plan will enter its third phase this year. More residential programs and vocational opportunities will be established in communities throughout Saskatchewan. The unique partnership with the Saskatchewan Association for Community Living will be continued. My government's policy of integrating the disabled into the community enhances rehabilitation and the quality of life for all concerned.

The successful partnership with the Saskatchewan Association of Rehabilitation Centres demonstrates the valuable contribution the disabled can make when given the opportunity to demonstrate their abilities. To protect those who are unable to take care of themselves you will be asked to consider guardianship legislation. The mentally disabled will be protected from discrimination by amendments to *The Saskatchewan Human Rights Code*.

Welfare reform initiatives introduced by my government will continue. Emphasis will be placed on work search training and job placement for all employable clients of the welfare system. Parents will receive training in proper nutrition, parental skill development, and consumer life skills.

The New Careers Corporation will provide more innovative work training projects in the north and elsewhere. The recent Cumberland House agreement also provides a model for future co-operation in the north. My ministers will continue to participate with northern communities and the mining industry in a range of social and economic initiatives, including community agreements and resource development.

My government maintains its leadership role in interprovincial matters and has placed family issues on the top of the national agenda. Saskatchewan will host a national symposium on The Family this summer which will focus on diversity, change and stress in modern family life.

QUALITY OF LIFE

Protection for the people of Saskatchewan extends beyond basic needs to include public safety and the quality of life.

Alcohol, illicit drugs and the crimes associated with them impose heavy cost in wasted human potential, family stress, injury and death. My government will build on effective awareness programs to combat the use of drugs. It will encourage the involvement of parents, teachers, law enforcement agencies and the general public to help our youth confront modern day threats to their health and well-being.

Protecting our people from crime, while caring for victims and rehabilitating offenders, are matters of concern. My government will co-operate with communities to seek alternatives to incarceration for non-violent crime. Skill training programs will be pursued as a constructive use of funds in the rehabilitation of offenders. Legislation will be placed before you to provide for services and recovery options for the victims of crime.

The protection of workers is key to the maintenance of the labour force and, for this reason, my government will undertake a public review of *The Occupational Health and Safety Act* this year. Legislation which addresses the rights and obligations of employers, unions and employees, and enhanced working conditions for part-time workers will be placed before you.

Legislation will also be introduced to implement the federal-provincial consensus on pension reform. Amendments include increased eligibility, improved survivor benefits, and greater portability.

My government was the first in North America to introduce a pension plan for homemakers, part-time workers and the self-employed. Our people, particularly women, have been quick to recognize the value of this initiative as an important building block for their future security. The Plan has forty-seven thousand members of whom 80% are women and 40% are homemakers. You will be asked to consider legislation to improve and add flexibility to the Saskatchewan Pension Plan.

My ministers' efforts to protect senior citizens will continue. Special attention will be paid to the changing housing and health care needs of seniors and to maintaining independence for as long as possible. My government is committed to building more enriched housing units as a preferable and efficient alternative to long-term care facilities. Seniors in Saskatchewan will receive the support necessary to allow them to live with dignity and independence.

Seniors represent a wealth of expertise upon which the province is building. Seniors teaching other seniors is but one example in a wide range of voluntary effort. My ministers will encourage seniors to participate actively in various community activities and will provide them with the opportunity to contribute whenever possible.

ENVIRONMENT

The protection and enhancement of our global environment depends on the active participation of government, the private sector, local communities and individuals. People world-wide share this responsibility.

My government has improved the regulation of mines, and mine waste containment systems have been installed at all Saskatchewan mines. In addition, mining companies are now required to undertake on-going reclamation of mined land.

My government also introduced a new *Clean Air Act* to control air emissions from industrial plants in the province and to protect against pollutants which contribute to acid rain. My government's commitment to this problem will be demonstrated by the introduction of the most up-to-date environmental technology in the new Shand power plant. My government will introduce new legislation to complement the initiatives of the federal and other provincial governments to protect the earth's ozone layer. In addition, legislation will be also be placed before you to increase fines levied under our existing provincial environmental statutes.

We must find new and innovative ways of dealing with environmental matters. My government has led the way in the development of an aluminum can waste recycling program which is already serving as a model for other provinces and states. This initiative has led to a co-operative approach among the four western provinces to find additional mechanisms to deal with other recycled products. Legislation will also be introduced to allow a tax on environmentally-unsafe products to encourage industry to develop environmentally-sensitive technology for the delivery of these products.

The management and enhancement of our environment requires that we develop a long-term comprehensive strategy which must integrate economic decisions. For this reason, my government is committed to a Saskatchewan Round Table on the Environment and the Economy which will meet for the first time this spring.

In co-operation with our universities and high-tech industries, my government will be undertaking new initiatives to deal with a number of important environmental issues including the management of hazardous waste, pesticide container disposal and biological agents in farming.

My ministers are pursuing a water management and irrigation strategy which pays specific attention to drought control and soil management. The Luck Lake project, with a projected capacity for 30,000 acres, will be pumping water for the first time this spring and a similar state-of-the-art irrigation project is proceeding at Riverhurst. In addition, my government will enter into a major Accord on Soil and Water Conservation and Development with the federal government.

My government remains committed to the preservation of our natural surroundings which add quality to all our lives. The recent creation of the Saskatchewan Upland Protection Enhancement and Restoration program and the Integrated Forestry Wildlife Habitat project will co-ordinate new and existing conservation programs to protect natural resources, waterfowl, fish and other wildlife in our province. The Saskatchewan Wildlife Federation, Weyerhaeuser Canada Limited, Wildlife Habitat Canada and the Saskatchewan Natural History Society will be partners in these new environmental endeavours. Legislation will be placed before you to facilitate the creation of the Grasslands National Park in southwest Saskatchewan.

My government will increase the promotion of Saskatchewan tourism at home and through our overseas offices. Communities will be encouraged to participate in Saskatchewan's tourism industry. Theme holidays, northern adventures and cultural events will be highlighted. The province will host the Canada Summer Games this year, an event which will attract many visitors to Saskatchewan and enhance our profile in the sports world.

My ministers will also present legislation to establish Wanuskewin Provincial Heritage Park. The unique sites of our province's pre-history — older than the Pyramids of Egypt — will draw visitors and international specialists. These resources will be developed as a first-class tourist facility yet serve as a reminder of our unique heritage and as a valuable educational resource.

The successful development of our Provincial Parks, in co-operation with communities and the private sector, will be continued with tourist destination potential as the goal.

THE ECONOMY

Agriculture remains the foundation of the provincial economy. The impact of the drought of the last year cannot be underestimated. My government responded by introducing feed and drought relief programs to ease the worst financial difficulties faced by farmers and ranchers. This winter's snowfall, coupled with better world grain prices, is cause for some optimism in Saskatchewan rural communities.

Legislation for protection and mediation services for farmers was consolidated last year in *The Saskatchewan Farm Security Act*. In this session, you will be asked to consider consolidating farm finance legislation with new and innovative farm financing options. *The Farm Finance Act* will expand the mandate of the Agricultural Credit Corporation of Saskatchewan to provide loans to producers to purchase their home quarter and to re-establish viable farm operations. A pilot project on equity financing will also be introduced. These measures will present alternative means of stabilizing the financial status of many young producers.

A new Department of Agriculture and Food will provide a mechanism for moving Saskatchewan into the agri-food sector. Employment in agriculture will expand as we build on our grain and livestock base by processing agricultural products for consumption here and internationally. Saskatchewan will grow, process, package, market and ship products to consumers in traditional and emerging markets throughout the world. This is a natural expansion of our efforts to capture new markets for crops and livestock while diversifying the agricultural economy.

The Agricultural Development Fund will be extended and strengthened. The Fund will be mandated to co-operate with the private sector in agriculture biotechnology research. With the recent establishment of Ag West Biotech my government will focus on applied technology in agriculture. An enhanced Centre for Agricultural Medicine at the University of Saskatchewan will have new capacity to respond to the specific medical problems of the farm chemical sector such as toxicity, chemical handling and related diseases.

Legislation will also be introduced to consolidate existing agricultural activities in regulation and inspection, covering areas such as livestock and crop production, chemicals and pest control.

The historic signing of the Canada-USA Free Trade Agreement marks the beginning of an exciting new growth period for the economy of this province and the nation. The Free Trade Agreement is important for the province since almost forty per cent of Saskatchewan products are sold to our closest neighbour.

The province continues to look outward to pursue world-wide trade and investment opportunities. My First Minister recently strengthened our links with the Asia-Pacific market. Interest in buying our agricultural products, natural resources, rural gas technology, and fibre optic telecommunications is expanding. This is a rapidly growing market with trade opportunities which cannot be ignored. My government will continue to promote Saskatchewan and our export sector. Measures will be introduced to better equip our businesses to compete internationally.

Saskatchewan has a large stake in the successful resolution of the current Uruguay round of trade liberalization measures. My government must continue to promote our interests in the GATT and multilateral trade negotiations with the European Community, the USA and the Asia-Pacific Rim. My First Minister is seeking more joint ventures to position Saskatchewan to take full advantage of the trade opportunities in the Asia-Pacific Rim today, and the opportunities to be created by the 1992 European trade bloc.

My government will work with small business to develop a Business Loan Associations Guarantee Program to improve access to credit. In addition a broader range of financial services will be made available to small businesses to further take advantage of export opportunities.

The public, private and co-operative sectors all contribute to the building and diversification of Saskatchewan. Examples include the partnership in the NewGrade Energy Heavy Oil Upgrader, rural gasification through SaskPower and the development of our high-tech industries by private, co-operative and public sector companies.

Saskatchewan's natural resource sector is in an excellent position to take advantage of the changing demands of international markets. Planned gas well development will generate new economic activity and ensure our continued self-sufficiency in, and sales of, natural gas. Potash production and sales are expanding and opportunities in Saskatchewan's mining industry are increasing.

My government remains committed to the decentralization of services throughout the province. The Rural Service Network has already proven a valuable stimulus to rural economic development. Rural development corporations and municipalities will provide further opportunities for diversification in rural areas.

The Buy Saskatchewan program will maximize the opportunity for local business to compete on private, government, and Crown corporation-sponsored projects. A wide range of new product lines such as hospital beds, motorized kitchens for the disabled, metal fabricated products and Saskatchewan-made furniture have been created. The program will also promote the range of opportunities available for the supply of government services by all small businesses in the province.

Public Participation will continue to chart a new course for economic growth, diversification and job creation in Saskatchewan. Designed to meet the specific needs of our province, it expands upon our history of co-operative ownership in business, community involvement and the delivery of public services.

Public participation initiatives through employee ownership, such as the Meadow Lake Sawmill, will be further encouraged. New savings opportunities in Crown Corporation bonds allow Saskatchewan families to save locally while earning a favourable return and building economic activity in the province. Public participation is leading to the creation of a capital market in Saskatchewan which mobilizes local savings rather than borrowing only from international finance markets at high interest rates.

My Ministers will prepare for public share offerings in several of our Crown Corporations including the Potash Corporation of Saskatchewan, SaskEnergy, and the general insurance business of Saskatchewan Government Insurance. Legislation relating to these initiatives will be placed before you for your consideration.

THE FUTURE

The Future Corporation has been established to highlight Saskatchewan's contribution to world development in new inventions, ideas and products. The Future Corporation will focus upon Saskatchewan's role as a quality producer of high technology and the application of technology to change and development. This initiative enables communities and individuals to participate in the plan for our future as we launch Saskatchewan in the World and into the twenty-first century.

I am pleased that, at this time, Their Royal Highnesses the Duke and Duchess of York have accepted our invitation to visit Saskatchewan. Prince Andrew and Sarah, Duchess of York, plan to spend five days in our province in July. The focus of their tour will be on children, our native peoples, and the north. I know that the people of Saskatchewan will extend a warm welcome to our Royal Visitors.

Our province is well-placed, with forward and outward-looking policies, to meet the challenges of the future. My government will continue to protect the citizens of this province while acting as an agent of change for economic growth and social progress.

My government's priorities for this Session are health, education, agriculture, the environment, families and children. Economic development and diversification of Saskatchewan will contribute to the development of these priorities.

I leave you now to the business of the Session, with full confidence that you will favourably discharge your duties and responsibilities.

May Divine Providence continue to bless our province and guide this Legislature in all its deliberations.